

HOUSEMEN NEWS AND STAGE DOOR CHAT

All Work and No Play Doesn't Make Dull Boy Of Busy Edmund Lowe

By Harriette Underhill

Edmund Lowe loves to work! He also enjoys the other pursuits which to the ordinary mortal come under the head of mortifying the flesh.

He arises at 7 o'clock in the morning, and from his chamber in the tower of the Lambs watches the sun rise over the hillsides as he shaves. Then he walks to the studio—the Norma Talmadge studio, fortunately, and not the Fort Lee brand—because he thinks it is good for him. Arrived at the studio, he puts on his make-up and at 9 o'clock is all ready to act, a silent monument of reproach to all late comers. He then acts until 6:30 or 7 o'clock, after which he removes his make-up, walks to the theater, puts on some more make-up and acts again, and enjoys it.

Of course, it is pretty nice to be leading man to Norma Talmadge in the daytime and leading man to Lenore Ulric in the night.

Some one said a long time ago that "all work and no play made Jack a dull boy." Perhaps Jack would have been a dull boy anyway, for it certainly hasn't made Edmund a dull boy. He has rather the time to read a half-hour after having talked to Mr. Lowe between scenes.

It is always like that when you interview anybody in a studio; he is forever being called away for a minute, and that was what this was, the shooting of the very last scenes for "The Woman Gives," Norma Talmadge's new picture.

Mr. Talmadge called for us at the hotel and drove us over to the studio and then departed on a shopping tour. "I didn't do my Christmas shopping early," she said. "But you don't need me, everybody else is there."

So we went in and got past the boy at the door, who is so cruel and discouraging to all applicants with his "longing for," although the boy doesn't know it yet, we got in the picture, too.

It happened like this: The scene was an interesting one. In the center of the studio was built a street, and the floor was sprinkled with salt to look like snow. About twelve feet up in the air men were suspended who made it seem as if they had bags of flour, paper and others had powdered their faces, and when they all sprinkled together well, you could only stand still and gasp. "Ain't nature wonderful?"

Mr. Lowe found us a good spot where we could watch everything. Then he went inside the "prop" house and came out with a large bag of flour. "It was evidently part of the plot," he said. "I was looking for a bit of whisky used to look, wrapped up and ready for delivery."

"I saw you make that there a man come up and tapped us on the shoulder and said: 'You're No. 5. When I call your name, walk across the set and go into that house.' And because we hadn't time to explain, when he called we walked."

On the way we met Mr. Lowe, and, thinking we had been called, we went before the camera again, we resolved to have one scene with the leading man.

"Good morning," we said. "What have you in that bundle?"

"A bottle of whisky which I am taking to my sweetheart," he answered. "You're welcome," we retorted and passed on.

And then, after all, we found that they had been only rehearsing and the camera wasn't going at all.

"Now," we said, "they won't want you for five minutes until they cut up some more scenes," came here and interviewed. First, do you like making pictures?"

"Love 'em,"

"Better than the stage?"

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What Briggs Saw at "Miss Millions"



New York Girl Made Her First Dramatic Hit In a New York Theater

Usually when a new, young actress makes a big-sized hit in a Broadway production the management digs deep into the mine of biographical data to find the new favorite hails from Zebulon, Ohio, or Birdseye, Idaho. Also, that she came to New York to make her way in a big, cruel world, and back home on the farm there's a big, two-story, old-fashioned house.

That's usually the way of it, and usually the truth. But not so in the case of the slender, blue-eyed little girl who sprang into prominence with the opening of "For the Defense" at the Playhouse. This young actress is Winifred Lenihan. She didn't have to come to New York—she was born here. She also was educated here, went to dramatic school here, hunted a job here, got it, and made her debut in a New York theater before a New York audience.

But because she happened to be born within subway distance of the theatrical district it doesn't follow that Miss Lenihan, who is just as naive and pretty as she can be, didn't have her own little trials. She did. Obstacles popped up right and left, not the least of which was the determination of her mother that she should be a school teacher.

Perhaps it was the thought of a school teacher's rather uncertain future and wages that led Miss Lenihan to hesitate before entering Smith College. She had been graduated from Bryant High School, Long Island City, and she had been a good student. Her room at Smith had been reserved, but something happened. The young lady happened to catch sight of the adver-

Chorus Girl Shortage Only in Short Girls, Assures Mr. Wayburn

There is no alarming shortage of chorus girls. At least Ned Wayburn should know. He has hired more chorus girls than any one else on Broadway and that means anywhere. So another fabrication is nailed and a possible panic averted.

"That is," qualified Mr. Wayburn, "there is no shortage of the common or roof-garden variety of chorus girls as such. There is, however, looming as a possibility a shortage of short chorus girls."

It seems on investigation that chorus girls are distinctly classified. There is the tall, shapely, majestic creature, who displays priceless costumes and whose art consists in stalking sideways through downcast lashes at the front row. She is the "show girl." Then there is the "medium girl." This isn't the kind of medium who takes two berries out of your jeans and tells you John Barleycorn is going to win the sixth at Havana. It's a girl who is not big enough to be a show girl and who isn't little enough for the pony—just the right size for the downright hard, effective work which makes a show scene. Last is the small type. Now of this small type there is a certain kind of girl who is all the way through. She can dance, sing, and, above all, look. She is cute. This little fairy is getting harder and harder to find.

Even this threatened shortage has not, however, affected the Wayburn shows, he says. "We are better fixed than most producers. We have a higher rate of pay, a better field of selection, I think, and I believe I can claim it is no idle boast, that my long experience has enabled me to take better of show girls than most other producers. I can get a kind of girl for the Capitol and Ziegfeld who might hesitate to join some other show."

"For instance, chorus girls are very human. A girl will join a show such as the two I have mentioned for reasons other than salary. First they present a future. Each girl is studied. Her individuality is recognized. She has a chance. Second, there is the lure of the beauty of the setting and especially the costumes of the show. There is no woman on earth to whom the chance to wear a \$1,500 gown which is built to make her, and only her, beautiful and original does not appeal."

Even in the matter of pay, Mr. Wayburn presented a rosy picture of the luck of the present chorus girl in the free-for-all-between-wage-scale and mounting costs. "My first association with chorus girls in the show business was with Max Erwin in 1917," said the producer. "We had an excellent show and got the best in the way of chorus girls. The girls were paid \$12 a week in New York and \$15 on tour. A show with which I was associated shortly afterward paid the girls \$20 a week, and at that sum, without other deductions, the show went to the Pacific Coast over the Northern Pacific and played back over the Southern route. The girls bought all the necessities of their costumes and paid their own sleeper and dining car bills."

As a contrast Mr. Wayburn said that the present rate of pay at the Capitol and the Follies was \$50 a week.

The Ensemble Director

Finally Miss Lenihan secured an engagement in Winifred Ames's production of "The Betrothal." It was a Broadway part in a Broadway show at a Broadway theater—but not a speaking part, anyway, she made a pleasing impression. Richard Bennett, the star of "For the Defense," saw her and remembered her work.

And it happened that John D. Williams, a short time ago, was looking for a young girl of the type required for the role of Anne Woodstock in the Elmer L. Rice drama. It was a part that required youthful charm and freshness and real emotional power. Miss Lenihan saw Mr. Williams after several unsuccessful attempts, and then Mr. Bennett saw Miss Lenihan. That was all that was needed. Winifred Lenihan got the part, and she is playing it much to the satisfaction of Mr. Williams, Mr. Bennett, the New York critics, her mother and three sisters. Only one person so far has found her work not to his liking. This hard-to-please individual is none other than the five-year-old "kid" brother, who'd much rather see Bill Hart act than Sister Winnie any day.

Miss Lenihan is just twenty. While she has shown extraordinary power as an emotional actress, it is her ambition to play comedy, perhaps farce. But notwithstanding these desires, she, like all the others, is willing to play any sort of role, as she believes that versatility, after all, is what really counts.

Leon Errol, Prize Drunk Of the Stage, Does Not Touch a Drop Himself

Leon Errol had not found time to remove the drunken camouflage from his nose when we routed him out behind the scenes at the Palace Theater. He apologized for his condition, said it wasn't natural and modestly draped a towel around his shoulders. We told him there was only one thing in the world we wanted to discuss with him, and that was prohibition, and didn't he think his part would soon go out of fashion?

"The drunken man is out of fashion? But that's just the point. Not yet awhile. But if you believe me, prohibition doesn't mean anything in my life. I've been studying the drunk for so long that he has become a pathological problem to me. And I don't drink myself."

This was depressing news for Leon Errol. He had been playing "wet" parts ever since he learned to swim at the age of five in Australia. He had acquired the drunk in the land of his birth. His drunken dance in the "Follies" has become a classic of its kind, and his performance in the Palace last week on his return from the London Hippodrome was one of the most exuberantly funny things we have ever seen.

"Now tell us exactly how it's done and just where you get the psychology of the drunk. If you don't know what it is to be half gone, you can't know what it is to be half gone."

"I suppose it is rather funny to be drunk in town and prohibition inogue," he fended. "I hope it didn't make people feel too thirsty. I'm afraid it must be instinctive in my case to

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Houdini is in the Movies To Perpetuate His Work As a Master Magician

If Harry Houdini were to die to-morrow he would pass out content with the fullness of life and with the knowledge of experiences such as few men have had.

He confessed this quite simply as he sat in his study and tinkered with the keys of a typewriter. The room had more of the atmosphere of the student than of the magician. Houdini, among other things, is a writer and lover of books. His shelves are filled with rare specimens of many kinds. His collection of books on magic is the most extensive in existence. The keen, piercing eyes of the magician were focussed intently on his audience as he told something of his life story. The knotted wrists that have defied handcuffs and manacles and made Houdini a universally known figure lay in repose. There was a look of quiet quality, he says, that has enabled him to do unaccountable things.

"If I were to die to-morrow I could not complain," Houdini declared. "I have performed every known feat of magic from the smallest to the largest. The most remarkable thing probably was my vanishing elephant Jenny weighing 10,000 pounds, who used to disappear systematically in the Hippodrome. My smallest feat was swallowing a couple of packages of needles and bringing them out threaded."

"My opinion Harry Keller, the original creator of the wonder, Princess Karnak, is the greatest magician the world ever saw. This feat is one of the classics of wizardry. At present I am writing Keller's biography. There is a difference among the magicians of to-day. More of them are specializing and they do not zealously try to keep their secrets from each other as they did in the old days. They are more intent now on improving their art than they are on furthering their interests."

Houdini's discovery of his lock-breaking gift dates back to the time when he was a boy in Appleton, Wis., he wanted to get into the cupboard where the pastry was kept, but mother had the key, so Harry simply manipulated the lock. It cannot truthfully be said he realized then that he had any special gift in this direction. But later, when he worked in a machine shop, a young man came in handcuffed. The boy had been shot and he wanted to free himself. Houdini struck on a way of releasing him and thought nothing more of it until he became a magician. Endless theories have been advanced as to the secret of his powers. There are those who say he slips out of handcuffs as an eel slips through the fingers of an amateur fisherman. Others say he manipulates cell locks by muscular magnetism. There is a further supposition that he squeezes himself through bars of cells. Superstitious persons believe that spirits help him to escape.

"I have accomplished everything by natural means," said Houdini when questioned on this score. "And not entirely by brawn. Brain work has been necessary, and concentration is more than anything else put together. It is the presentation of the trick, and not the trick itself that interests me. In my hands my life is a mystery. I am a person who is talking. No, I don't believe in spiritualism at all, and I think the ouija board is nothing more nor less than a pleasant pastime. I have

traveled all over the world and studied magic from every angle. It is fascinating beyond belief."

One and a half years ago Houdini decided to go into motion pictures, because he wanted some of his feats to be filmed. The next generation would be skeptical and think his stories of his magic handed down to them as tradition. In his latest picture, "The Vanishing of the Indian," he was thrown overboard into the sea in a box with 500 pounds of dead weight, got out of the box and, finally, out of the water. In this picture he also does the Indian rope trick. The rope is supposed to hang without any visible means of support. He climbs up it.

Houdini sails for England this week to fulfill a vaudeville engagement. During 1921-22 he will tour the world, making a mystery picture. He thinks motion pictures the most wonderful profession in the world, because there is a place in them for the old as well as the young. While in Europe he intends to be pictured in the Tower Bridge in a parachute. He has a theory that a flash of the director's camera will make the picture should be thrown on the screen.

Houdini is forty-five years old and looks thirty-five. He runs all his affairs like a school boy, he believes in vigorous physical exercise for ever one. He neither drinks nor smokes. He thinks the greatest thing he has done was inventing a diving suit from which the diver can escape. He is a hard worker, his favorite thing is government. Among other things he invented the wardrobe trunk and the double-colored typewriter ribbon. He is the author of "The Unmasking of Robert Houdini," "The Right Way to Do Wrong," "Standard Science," and "My Life History." He is president of the Society of American Magicians and of the Magicians' Club of London.

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Houdini sails for England this week to fulfill a vaudeville engagement. During 1921-22 he will tour the world, making a mystery picture. He thinks motion pictures the most wonderful profession in the world, because there is a place in them for the old as well as the young. While in Europe he intends to be pictured in the Tower Bridge in a parachute. He has a theory that a flash of the director's camera will make the picture should be thrown on the screen.

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On the legitimate stage in Britain there is an unfortunate tendency toward the make-up play just at present. Personally, as I possess a face of camp, I always try to visualize the scene and to throw myself into the part. My work on the legitimate stage gave me the habit, more or less, of giving a great many emotional roles, and have played with Sir Herbert Tree in "Macbeth," "Twelfth Night," "The Taming of the Shrew" and other plays by Shakespeare.